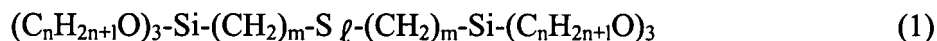


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A pneumatic tire having a tread formed of a rubber composition comprising:

100 parts by weight of a rubber component containing at least 5 % by weight of natural rubber graft-copolymerized with an organic compound having an unsaturated bond and/or epoxidized natural rubber, and

5 to 150 parts by weight of silica with a nitrogen-absorbing specific surface area of 100 to 300 m²/g, and a silane coupling agent which fulfills the following formula (1)



wherein in said formula (1) n is an integer of 1 to 3, m is an integer of 1 to 4, ℓ is an integer of 2 to 8 and the average value of ℓ is 2.1 to 3.5, wherein protein within said natural rubber graft-copolymerized with an organic compound having an unsaturated bond and epoxidized natural rubber, contains an ~~the~~ amount of protein converted to nitrogen content of at most 0.10 % by weight ~~converted to nitrogen content~~.

2. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 1, wherein a silane coupling agent is contained in an amount of 1 to 20 % by weight of said silica.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 1, wherein the silica is present in an amount of 10 to 120 parts by weight.

7. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 1, wherein the silica is present in an amount of 15 to 100 parts by weight.

8. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 1, wherein the silane coupling agent is present in an amount of 2 to 15% by weight of the weight of silica.

9. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 6, wherein the silane coupling agent is present in an amount of 2 to 15% by weight of the weight of silica.

10. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 7, wherein the silane coupling agent is present in an amount of 2 to 15% by weight of the weight of silica.

11. (Previously Presented) The pneumatic tire of claim 1, wherein the silane coupling agent is selected from the group consisting of bis(3-triethoxysilylpropyl)polysulfide, bis(2-

triethoxysilylethyl)polysulfide, bis(3-trimethoxysilylpropyl)polysulfide, bis(2-trimethoxysilylethyl)polysulfide, bis(4-triethoxysilylbutyl)polysulfide and bis(4-trimethoxysilylbutyl) polysulfide.

12. (Currently Amended) A tire tread which consists essentially of

100 parts by weight of a rubber component containing at least 5 % by weight of natural rubber graft-copolymerized with an organic compound having an unsaturated bond and/or epoxidized natural rubber, and

5 to 150 parts by weight of silica with a nitrogen-absorbing specific surface area of 100 to 300 m²/g, and a silane coupling agent which fulfills the following formula (1)



wherein in said formula (1) n is an integer of 1 to 3, m is an integer of 1 to 4, ℓ is an integer of 2 to 8 and the average value of ℓ is 2.1 to 3.5, wherein protein within said natural rubber graft-copolymerized with an organic compound having an unsaturated bond and epoxidized natural rubber, contains ~~the~~ an amount of protein converted to nitrogen content of at most 0.10 % by weight ~~converted to nitrogen content~~.

13. (Previously Presented) The tire tread of claim 12, wherein the amount of protein is 0.03 to 0.05% by weight.